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# The War on Spies

**As Washington steps up defenses against a growing security threat, critics warn against overreaction.**

Shaken by a rash of spy scandals, the White House and Congress are mounting a major counterattack against foreign espionage operations in the U.S.

The campaign seeks to fight hostile intelligence activities by curtailing the army of Soviet agents in the United States, strengthening the government's counterintelligence arm, deterring Americans from selling secrets and curbing the number who are cleared to handle sensitive information.

Three spy cases now in the courts are responsible for ringing alarm bells on Capitol Hill over what is perceived as a growing security threat.

In one, an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, for the first time ever, is accused of passing secret documents to a female KGB agent, who was his lover.

In a second, a former Central Intelligence Agency employe is alleged to have given her Ghanaian boyfriend secrets of American intelligence operations in Africa.

The third case—the most worrisome in the view of counterintelligence specialists—involves a retired Navy chief warrant officer, John Anthony Walker; his sailor son; his brother, who is a retired Navy officer, and a friend, who also served in the Navy. They are charged with selling vital military secrets to the Soviets over more than a decade.

These cases add to widespread uneasiness over a KGB drive to acquire advanced American technology that is banned for export to the U.S.S.R.

**Tightening security.** As Washington seeks to seize the initiative in the war against spies, it is Congress that is setting the pace. Previously rejected measures now being seriously considered by lawmakers would—

- Expand the use of polygraphs. Lawmakers are conferring on legislation that would give the Pentagon the green light to use polygraphs to test the loyalty of defense and contractor personnel. Over the next two years, the Pentagon is authorized to run 10,500 mandatory lie-detector tests on defense and contractor personnel with access to the government's most sensitive information.
- Stiffen penalties for espionage. Some in Congress are calling for the execution of spies uncovered in the armed forces during peacetime, contrasting with the present maximum punishment of 10 years' imprisonment.
- Intensify security checks. After the Walker case came to light, Congress added 25 million dollars to the Pentagon's budget to finance an extra 150,000 reinvestigations of personnel previously given security clearances. Defense Investigative Service officials say that the money will enable them to increase the number of street agents by 50 percent.

In addition to these moves to deter Americans from turning to espionage, Congress is taking steps to reduce the threat posed by the 2,600 Soviet-bloc diplomats stationed in the United States. The FBI estimates that one third of these are actively engaged in spying.

This small army of Soviet agents is expected to be reduced by legislation that would permit Moscow to keep no more diplomats in the U.S. than the number of American officials stationed in the U.S.S.R.

At the same time, lawmakers are trying to cramp the style of an estimated 200 Kremlin spies based at the United Nations by making all Soviet-bloc diplomats assigned to the world organization get State Department permission for travel, thereby making FBI surveillance easier.

The administration, while endorsing enthusiastically most congressional initiatives, has its own agenda in the antispy campaign. Its major effort is directed at tightening security by curtailing the number of people cleared to handle secret information.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has directed that 10 percent of the 4.3 million security clearances held by Pentagon employes and contractors be revoked by October 1. An even more ambitious and controversial cutback is being pursued by Navy Secretary John Lehman, who hopes to slice the Navy's clearances in half. In two months, he has achieved a 19 percent reduction, eliminating 170,000 and downgrading 63,000.

Not all of the administration's efforts are aimed at individuals. Other reforms given new impetus by the Walker case include the installation of hundreds of thousands of "scrambler" telephones, tighter computer security, and stepped-up surveillance at defense plants during off hours.

**Taking it to the KGB.** The Walker case also has boosted efforts to expand counterintelligence by the FBI. An administration official says that President Reagan does not intend to concentrate on passive measures—such as limiting security clearances—but aims to focus also on monitoring and investigating hostile intelligence officers in the U.S.

Actually, the administration quietly and steadily over the past four years has added funding for counterintelligence, with the support of the intelligence committees in Congress. Although details are top secret, some threads of the new activities can be discerned.

The FBI is stepping up electronic surveillance in an effort to uncover espionage in this country. At the same time, the CIA is helping friendly governments identify and thwart Soviet agents overseas in a strategy calculated to disrupt KGB operations wherever possible. In the past two years, over

FBI agent Richard Miller is shown in surveillance photo with Svetlana Ogorodnikova, KGB agent to whom he allegedly gave secrets. She has pleaded guilty to spying.

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150 Soviet spies have been expelled from countries around the world, well above the number of expulsions reported in previous years.

Plans now under consideration at the White House to further beef up the counterintelligence effort have not been disclosed.

Just how much difference all this will make in the great spy war is unclear—and also controversial. Some experts point out that this is not the first attempt to curtail security clearances and classified documents. Earlier efforts, they say, petered out before producing significant results.

A move in the 1970s to cut security clearances eventually was abandoned in the face of bureaucratic resistance. Instead, clearances over the past decade grew at a pace that overwhelmed the agents assigned to conduct background investigations. Between 1981 and 1983, things were so bad that the Pentagon simply stopped doing reinvestigations, even though these are required every five years for those with clearances at the top-secret level or above.

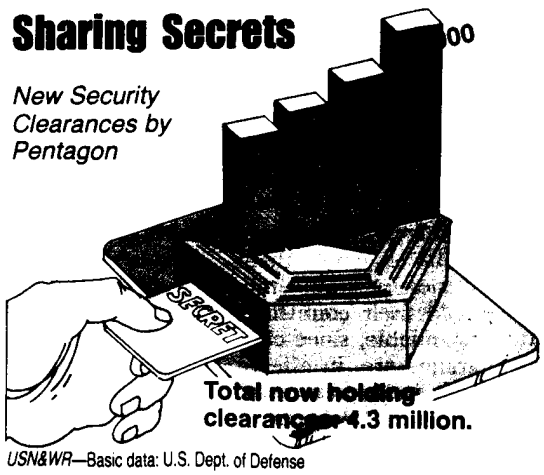
**Fiscal hurdle.** The cost of implementing a tougher security policy is another obstacle. Expanding follow-up investigations to include the 3 million defense and contractor workers with secret clearances would add 623 million dollars alone to the budget of the Defense Investigative Service over the next four years.

Senator William Roth (R-Del.), who headed an investigation earlier this year of the security-clearance program, argues that "given the enormous scope of the problem, there is no magic solution. What we need are steady and some rather prosaic steps."

Some are concerned, though, that the steps now being taken are an overreaction to the Walker case. "I'm afraid," says Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), vice chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, "that part of what we're seeing is just a PR response to past negligence. Providing a death penalty for spies eliminates their incentive to cooperate and the possibility of a trade with the Soviets. They aren't going to trade for spies if we send them in a casket."

## Sharing Secrets

*New Security Clearances by Pentagon*




*USN&WR*—Basic data: U.S. Dept. of Defense

Similarly, the expanded use of lie-detector tests is denounced by critics as potentially counterproductive. Representative Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) claims that the tests will "implicate all the innocent people who are worried or upset about being interrogated with a polygraph machine. The good, hotshot criminals and spies are going to beat the rap."

Even some members of Congress who support the use of polygraphs say they should not be relied on too heavily. Senator Leahy puts it this way: "We don't want the careers of Americans ruined because they drank too many cups of coffee one morning."

**Necessary tool.** Retired Gen. Richard Stilwell, who is in charge of a commission conducting a review of the Pentagon's security policies, staunchly defends polygraphs as a tool for detecting possible spies. While stressing that clearances are never withheld solely because of a lie-detector test, he says the polygraph has a "high utility . . . in identifying applicants who are clearly unsuitable."

The plan to beef up counterintelligence also is stirring controversy, with some top FBI officials siding with the critics. Edward O'Malley, head of the bureau's counterintelligence force, says that the government should adhere to the Attorney General's guidelines that were promulgated to avoid the excesses committed by the FBI and CIA in the 1970s. "I hope," he adds, "that there is no overreaction or hysteria."

Whatever the criticism, both Congress and the Reagan administration are determined to carry on with their intensified war against spies. Supporters of the policy emphasize that this is a struggle that the U.S. must be prepared to wage for years ahead.

"It's a little like crime on the street," says Senator Roth. "You're never going to be finished with it. But we are making a good start." □

## 3 Spy Cases That Trigger Alarm

**Ex-Navy radioman Jerry Whitworth is accused of supplying vital codes to the Soviets through John Anthony Walker, inset, alleged head of family spy ring.**

**Former CIA clerk Sharon Scranage is charged with giving secrets of U.S. intelligence operations to Michael Agbotui Sousoudis, inset, her Ghanaian lover.**

*By DAVID WHITMAN with ROBERT A. KITTLE, ORR KELLY and ROBERT S. DUDNEY*